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AN
ACCOUNT OF EXCAVATIONS

ON THE

SITE OF ROMAN BUILDINGS AT KESTON,

NEAR BROMLEY, KENT.

COMMUNICATED TO THE SOCIETY OF ANTIQUARIES

BY GEORGE R. CORNER, ESQ. F.S.A.

IN A LETTER ADDRESSED TO ADMIRAL W. H. SMYTH, V.P., F.R.S.

LONDON :

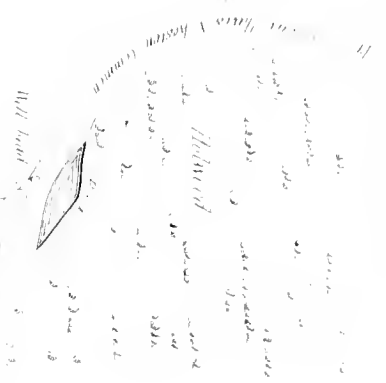
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1855.

FROM THE
ARCHÆOLOGIA,
VOL. XXXVI.



Top of bank



UPPER AND LOWER AVENUE

N. E. N. T. - 100 ft

N. E. N. T.

showing the N. of Roman land near
2500 ft. B.P. 100

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EXCAVATIONS ON
THE SITE OF ROMAN BUILDINGS
AT KESTON.

3, Paragon, New Kent Road,
27 November, 1854.

DEAR SIR,

In the twenty-second volume of *Archæologia*, Mr. A. J. Kempe has given an account of some then recent discoveries, by himself and Mr. Thomas Crofton Croker, near the ancient entrenchment called Cæsar's Camp, at Holwood Hill, Keston, near Bromley, Kent. Those discoveries consisted of the foundation of a circular Roman building, supposed to be a temple or tomb, with a square tomb, and two graves, in one of which was a stone coffin, and from the other a stone coffin had been several years previously removed to Wickham Court.

The foundations described by Mr. Kempe are situate in a field on Keston Court Farm, the property of the Rev. Sir Charles Francis Farnaby, Bart., of Wickham Court, which field bears the significant name of the Lower War Bank, being situate on a bold declivity, the upper part of which is called the Upper War Bank—a name which Mr. Kempe observes seems to denote “some seath or havoc done within its limits.” He remarks that two or three fields about the spot are full of the vestigia of human residence—tiles, scored bricks, pottery, the bones of men and animals: and he goes on to say, “it may be no violent stretch of fancy to suppose that the town here, abandoned by the Romans, was destroyed in the wars between the Saxons and Britons; and that in the name War Bank,^a or the Hill of Battle, we have the brief record of a sanguinary conflict.” Mr. Kempe tells us, “it has constantly been the current tradition of the neighbourhood, that about this spot was a large town,” and he says “I have always indeed suspected that this beautiful little valley south-west of Holwood Hill was the site of a Roman colony, and that the entrenchments on the northern side of that eminence might be the *Castrum Æstivum*, and retiring citadel, of the Roman forces stationed here. The cultivators of Keston Court Farm had uniformly asserted the existence of old

^a More likely Weard or Ward Bank. Here was probably the weard setle (watch seat, settle, bench, or bank) mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon charter referred to at p 6; and, as one of the significations of weard setle is a watch tower (Bosworth's A.-S. Dictionary), I should be inclined to suppose that the foundation of the circular building described by Mr. Kempe was that of a watch tower, but that its situation so far down the Bank does not seem to favour that conjecture.

foundations, scattered over the whole extent of War Bank Field and the two fields contiguous on either hand:" and Mr. Kempe discovered "masses of ruinous walls, and especially near the hedge, the foundation wall of a Roman building, two feet and a half in breadth, and thirty feet long, with two projecting walls about a foot asunder, on the north side (probably the walls of a flue), which ran under the hedge." But Mr. Kempe could not pursue this interesting part of his inquiry as far as he wished, the field being sowed for a crop of wheat as soon as ploughed.

Having obtained the permission of Sir Charles Francis Farnaby, and Mr. Abraham Smith, his tenant of Keston Court Farm, to make some further researches on this spot, I have this autumn, in company with Robert Lemon, Esq. F.S.A., John Richards, Esq. F.S.A., and other Fellows of our Society, been enabled to lay open some foundations of buildings in the Lower War Bank Field and the field adjoining, now known as the Eight Acres; and I have the honour to request you will lay before the Society of Antiquaries the result of our discoveries, which, without entering into the long-disputed question of the site of Noviomagus, at least prove that the remains of Roman buildings of considerable extent lie buried under the surface of two arable fields at Keston, the tracing of which, although only commenced, cannot, I think, but prove a work highly interesting to the Society.

We commenced our labours on Thursday, the 12th of October, and proceeded for three days of that week and four days of the week following, having, during the latter period, the kind and valuable assistance of John Yonge Akerman, Esq. F.S.A., Secretary of this Society.

We first opened the foundations denoted by Mr. Kempe on the plan accompanying his paper, near to the hedge which divides the Lower War Bank Field from the Eight Acres, and we found there the foundation of a wall composed of flints (the building material of the country) strongly set in mortar, but without tiles. This wall was about three feet thick and twenty-eight feet long, bearing north-east and south-west; and on the north-west side was a wall projecting from it at right angles, north-westward, and extending under the hedge into the adjoining field. This was evidently the foundation alluded to by Mr. Kempe.

Eighteen feet south-west from the end of this wall, we came upon another, at right angles to it, towards the south-east. This wall was of similar construction, but four feet thick, and twelve feet in length. Beyond this, towards the south-east, lay three detached portions of wall, one of which appeared to have slipped from its original position, and with the two other detached portions seemed to have formed a slight curve towards the east.

On the north side of this wall, and not far from the hedge, we discovered part of a pavement of flints laid on cement; the portion we laid open was about six or seven feet square: near it was a recess in the wall, which I could not but think looked as if intended for a gate. This wall also goes through the hedge into the Eight Acre Field. On the south-west side, at the end of the wall near to the hedge, we found a narrow opening or cavity in the wall, like a grave, but very small, being only three feet in length by one foot wide. South-eastward from this we came to a floor of concrete in the line of the first-mentioned wall, and occupying about six feet of it, beyond which the wall was traced about eighteen feet further south-westward, making the whole length of that wall, if it were continuous, about seventy-eight feet.

All these walls were within two feet from the surface of the ground, and communicated with other foundations in the Eight Acre Field adjoining; but about two years since, Mr. Smith, the farmer, grubbed up a narrow shaw which extended along the hedge, and took the opportunity of removing the foundations which were met with, out of the ground.

We however discovered in the Eight Acre Field, at a distance of about twelve feet from the hedge, the foundations of two parallel walls, extending at right angles to the principal wall in the War Bank Field; and, from the information we obtained through the labourers who had been employed by Mr. Smith to remove the foundations, I have been enabled to mark their position on the accompanying plan, by dotted lines, the foundations which we actually opened being shaded. I am inclined to think that these foundations formed part of an edifice of a public character, but further researches may afford better grounds than now are apparent for forming an opinion as to its use.

We were induced to leave for a time this portion of the field, in order to explore another part, where the farmer informed us his corn was thinner, and always turned yellow before other parts of the produce of the same field, and where the plough was most frequently obstructed by obdurate substances beneath the surface of the ground.

The point indicated by Mr. Smith was about a hundred feet south from the other foundations, and nearer to the middle of the Lower War Bank Field. Here we came, at about eighteen inches only below the surface, to the foundation of a wall running in a direction north-west and south-east, and which we opened for a length of forty-nine feet, together with a wall extending at a right angle from it at the north-west end, for a length of twelve feet six inches. These walls were two feet thick, and at the highest about four feet from the foundation. They were composed of flints and mortar, with a single course of Roman bonding-tiles,

laid along the whole length of the wall, upon a foundation of about six inches of flint-work, resting on the chalk; the superstructure above the tiles being composed of flint work, except that at the angle formed by the two walls, seven inches above the long course of tiles, there were two layers of tiles as a quoin.

The bonding-tiles were eleven inches wide, and had been sixteen inches long; but, as the thickness of the wall required more than one tile, and the length of two would have been too much, they were all broken at the side where they met in the centre of the wall.

We traced and laid open these walls and other foundations connected with them, until we developed what appears to be the almost complete foundation of a small Roman villa, being sixty feet six inches in length, by thirty-two feet eight inches in width; of which, as well as the foundations first mentioned, I submit a plan.

We were not fortunate enough to meet with anything like a tessellated pavement; but, as Mr. Kempe found in the temple or tomb, whatever flooring the buildings may have had seemed to have been completely destroyed; nor did we find any inscribed stone, nor even a potter's mark, nor any sculptured or carved stone of any kind: the only coin found was a small brass one of Valens; but Mr. Smith of Keston Court Farm has in his possession a few Roman coins which have been found on this spot: viz.

1. Clodius Albinus. Second-brass. Legend, *SAECVLI FRVGIFERO COS II.* Genius standing. A scarce type. (See Mr. Akerman's Descriptive Catalogue.)

2. Carausius. Third-brass. *PAX AVG.* Peace standing. (Two coins.)

3. Alleetus. Third-brass. Galley type. Legend obliterated.

4. Claudius Gothicus. Third-brass. *AEQVITAS AVG.* Equity standing.

5. Victorinus? Much defaced.

6. Constantinus Magnus. Second-brass. *SOLI INVICTO COMITI.* In the exergue *PLN.*

7. Ditto. Third-brass. The labarum between two soldiers. Legend left out from want of metal.

The ground however was full of fragments of Roman tiles of all sorts, as ridge-tiles, flue-tiles, and drain-tiles, some of them ornamented with various patterns. Numerous fragments of pottery, chiefly of black or dark grey earth, and some, but not much, of Samian ware, and that unornamented; perhaps the most remarkable was part of a colander of Samian ware. Some of the coarser pottery was studded on the inside with small silicious particles, as mentioned by Mr. Kempe, and we found also many pieces of stucco covered with a red pigment similar to that described by him as having covered the exterior of the circular building.

Indications of the action of fire were frequently apparent, and pieces of charcoal and scoriæ of iron and copper were found.

We found also bones and horns of animals and tusks of hogs, but no bones that we could recognise as having belonged to the human species.

Of metal substances, we found nails, a knife, and a thin flat piece of iron in shape of a crescent or gorget.

It was getting too late in the season to prosecute these researches any further this year, but I venture to express a hope that after harvest in the ensuing year further excavations may be made in these fields, which will doubtless lead to the discovery of other remains of the ancient state of this place, which appears to have realised the denunciations of Jeremiah and Micah against Zion—that they should be ploughed as a field.

I am indebted to my friend F. W. Fairholt, Esq. F.S.A., for a very faithful sketch of the scene of these discoveries, including the temple or tomb described by Mr. Kempe and the Upper War Bank Field, and shewing the position of the present discoveries with respect to those of Mr. Croker and Mr. Kempe.

I must not omit to mention, that in a field at a short distance from Keston Court Farm, near Baston Court, an ancient manorial residence in Hayes, now the property of James Thomas Fry, Esq. Master of the Reports and Entries in Chancery, there exist, about four feet below the surface, the foundations of a building which we found by probing the ground, having had the spot pointed out to us by an old inhabitant of the place; but we were obliged to defer further research until some future period.

The name of this place, Keston, has a very significant reference to the sepulchral remains which have been found here.

This name is not, as Hasted supposes, derived from the Camp at Holwood Hill, quasi “Casterton,” nor is it, as the same author observes, from Cæsar’s or Kæsar’s Town, according to the fancy of some ingenious etymologists; but I believe I have found the true derivation of the name in some Anglo-Saxon charters, the first of which is one of Æthelberht, King of Wessex, dated A.D. 862, whereby he gave and granted to Dryhtwald his minister ten carucates of land in a place called Bromleag, and the boundaries of the grant are thus described:

“Sunt etenim termini p̃dicti agelli circūjacentia. An norðan frā Ceddanelage to Langanleage,^b Bromleaginga Meare^c 7 Liolfshema.^d ðanne fram Langanleage to

^a Ceddanelage I take to be Kengley Bridge, at Southend, on the road from Lewisham to Bromley.

^b Langanleage—Langley in Beckenham.

^c Bromley Mark.

^d Lewisham.

ðam Wōnstocce.^e ðanne fram ðam Wōnstocce, be Modingahema Mearce,^f to Cinta Stiogole.^g ðanne fram Cinta Stiogole, be Modingahema Mearce, to Earnes beame.^h ðanne fram Earnes beame Cregsetna hagaⁱ an east halfe, seed hit to Liowsandene. ðanne fram Liowsandene to Swelgende.^k ðanne fram Swelgende, Cregsetna haga to Sioxslihtre.^l ðanne fram Sioxslihtre to Fearnbiorginga Mearce.^m Fearnbiorgingⁿ Mearee, hit seed to Cyðtaninga Mearce,ⁿ Cystaninga Meare, hit seed suðan to Weardsetle,^o ðanne fram Weardsetle, Cyðtaninga Meare to Wichæma Mearce. ðanne sio West Meare,^q be Wichæma Mearce, ut to Bipplestyde.^r ðanne fram Bipplestyde to Acustyde,^s to Biohahema Mearse,^t fram Acustyde to Ceddanelge ðanne belimpoð ðer to ðam londe fif denn^u au uhvalda Broecesham ðesdennes nama ðes oðres dennes nama' sænget hryg' billan ora is ðes ðriddan nama ðanne hoa denn in gleppan felda."

There are two other Anglo-Saxon charters, being grants of this land of Bromley, the one by Ædgar, King of the English and other people, in 966, to St. Andrew, and Ælfstan prior of the Church of Rochester; and the other by Ældred, in 987, to Aðelsige, his faithful minister; in both of which the boundaries are nearly similarly described as in the charter of Æthelberht which I have

^e The Wonstock, a fixed post or stulp, possibly at Stumps Hill, between Southend and Beckenham. Mr. Kemble conjectures that this word may have some reference to Wodin.

^f Nottingham Mark.

^g Cinta Stiogole, or Kent Style, I take to be Kent Gate, on the boundary of the county between Wickham and Addington.

^h Earnes beame signifies the Eagles' Home or Tree, but Mr. Kemble supposes the Earnes beame to be a tree marked with the figure of an eagle, not a tree in which the eagle built.

ⁱ The hedge or boundary of the settlers on the Creeca or River Cray.

^j Perhaps Leaves Green, Bromley Common.

^k Swelgende. The Swallow or Gulph

^l Query, Six Slaughters or Murders.

^m Farnborough Mark.

ⁿ Keston Mark, still known by that name.

^o The Watch Seat or Station, being south from Keston Mark, was most probably the Weard, Ward, or Watch Bank, now called "The War Bank," the situation of which with respect to Keston Mark corresponds with the Charter.

^p Wickham Mark.

^q Perhaps Westmore Green.

^r Bipplestyde is probably Beddlestead in Surrey, on the border of Kent.

^s I do not know where this place can be; there is a farm called Lustead near Westmore Green.

^t Biohahema might mean the Bee inclosure or Apiary.

^u A denne was a certain allotment of woodland in the weald.

quoted; and in all of them Cystaning Mearce is one of the boundaries. This name of Cystaning seem to be composed of cyst, "a chest or coffin," stane, "stone," and ing, "a field." It would thus mean, "The Field of Stone Coffins," a name singularly applicable to a spot where sepulchral remains, including stone coffins of a date anterior to the Anglo-Saxon name of the place, have been found at so recent a period.

The conversion of Cystaning into Keston is elucidated by Domesday Book, in which the place is called "Chestan." The "ch" being pronounced hard gives the modern name of the place.

The word "mearce," so frequently mentioned in the description of the boundary of the above mentioned grant, seems to require some notice: its obvious signification is "a boundary," but it is to be observed that the Anglo-Saxon tribes appear to have had as a boundary between each other a district of waste or uninclosed and uncultivated land, as in the Marches of Wales, called "marks," with which some sacred or superstitious ideas were connected. My friend Mr. Akerman has directed my attention to a passage in Kemble's Saxons in England, illustrative of this peculiarity,^a and we may suppose that some superstition

^a It is as follows:—"Let us first take into consideration the Mark in its restricted and proper sense of a boundary. Its most general characteristic is, that it should not be distributed in arable, but remain in heath, forest, fen and pasture. In it the Markmen—called in Germany, Markgenossen, and perhaps by the Anglo-Saxons Mearegeneátas—had commonable rights; but there could be no private estate in it, no líd or hlót, κλήπος or *haeredium*. Even if under peculiar circumstances any markman obtained a right to essart or clear a portion of the forest, the portion so subjected to the immediate law of property ceased to be mark. It was undoubtedly under the protection of the gods; and it is probable that within its woods were those sacred shades especially consecrated to the habitation and service of the deity.

"If the nature of an early Teutonic settlement, which has nothing in common with a city, be duly considered, there will appear an obvious necessity for the existence of a mark, and for its being maintained inviolate. Every community, not sheltered by walls, or the still firmer defences of public law, must have one, to separate it from neighbours, and protect it from rivals: it is like the outer pulp that surrounds and defends the kernel. No matter how small or how large the community—it may be only a village, even a single household, or a whole state—it will still have a mark, a space, or boundary, by which its own rights of jurisdiction are limited, and the encroachments of others are kept off. The more extensive the community which is interested in the mark, the more solemn and sacred the formalities by which it is consecrated and defended; but even the boundary of the private man's estate is under the protection of the gods and of the law. 'Accursed,' in all ages and all legislations, 'is he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. Even the owner of a private estate is not allowed to build or cultivate to the extremity of his own possession, but must leave a space for eaves. Nor is the general rule abrogated by changes in the original compass of the communities; as smaller districts coalesce and become, as it were, compressed into one body, the smaller and original marks may become obliterated and converted merely into commons, but the public mark will have been increased upon the new and extended frontier. Villages tenanted by Heardingas or

prevailed in the neighbourhood respecting Keston Mark (which is situate between Holwood Hill and the high road from Bromley to Farnborough, and was until a recent period an open common), from the fact that in the church, the communion table of oak is inlaid with a device formed of different woods, in the form of a cross *bottonée*; underneath which is written "The Keston Mark," and "In hoc signo vinces."

The table is of the seventeenth century, and the device upon it seems to indicate that the clergy of that day sought to divert the thoughts of the people from a superstitious notion about the Keston Mark, to the Christian mark of the Cross.

Mr. Akerman suggests that this cross is a *reproduction of a very early cross* set up on the establishment of Christianity in this part of England, the earliest

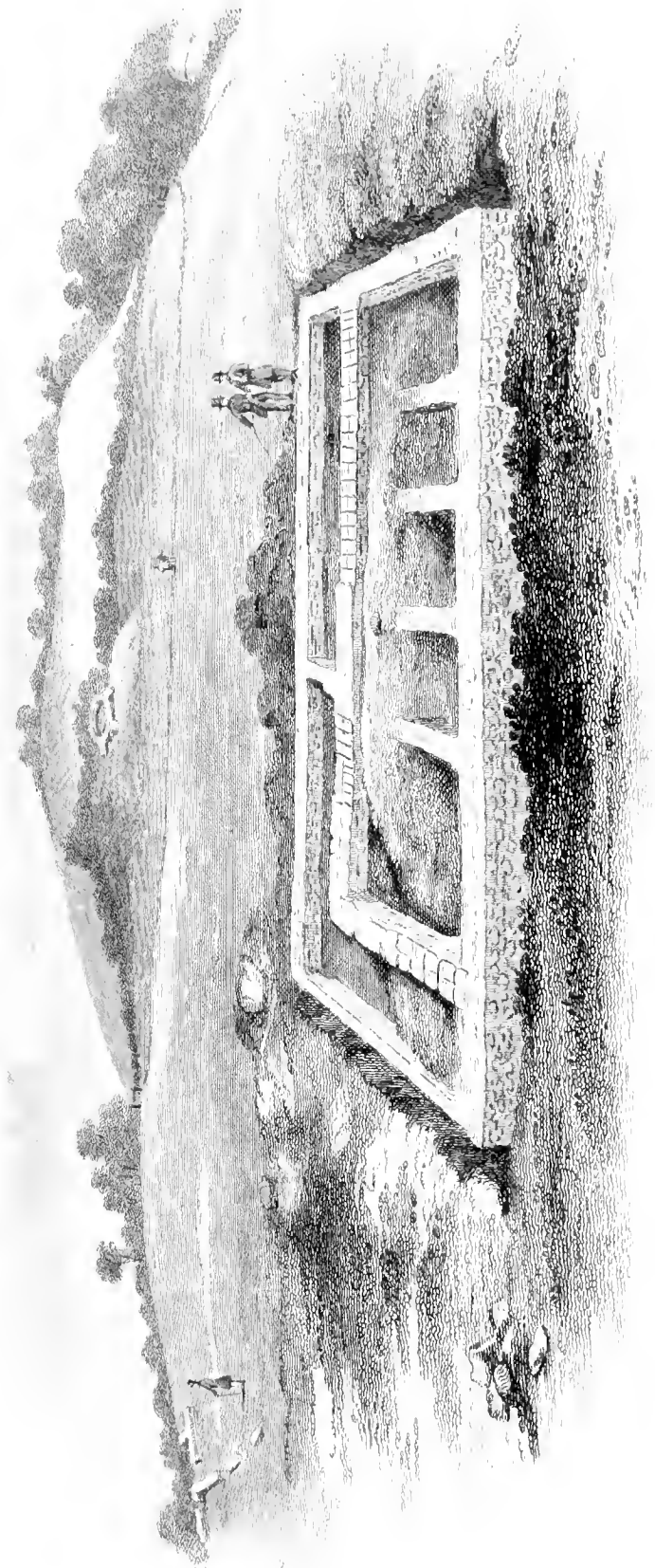
Mólingas may cease to be separated, but the larger divisions which have grown up by their union—Mea-waras, Mægsetan, or Hwiccas—will still have a boundary of their own; these again may be lost in the extending circuit of Wessex or Mercia; till, a yet greater obliteration of the marks having been produced through increasing population, internal conquest, or the ravages of foreign invaders, the great kingdom of England at length arises, having wood and desolate moorland or mountain as its mark against Scots, Cumbrians, and Britons, and the eternal sea itself as a bulwark against Frankish and Frisian pirates.

"But, although the mark is waste, it is yet the property of the community: it belongs to the freemen as a whole, not as a partible possession: it may as little be profaned by the stranger, as the arable land itself which it defends. It is under the safeguard of the public law long after it has ceased to be under the immediate protection of the gods: it is unsafe, full of danger; death lurks in its shades and awaits the incautious or hostile visitant:

all the markland was
with death surrounded,
the snares of the foe:

punishments of the most frightful character are denounced against him who violates it; and though, in historical times, these can only be looked upon as comminatory and symbolical, it is very possible that they may be the records of savage sacrifices believed due, and even offered, to the gods of the violated sanctuary. I can well believe that we, too, had once our Diana Taurica. The marks are called accursed; that is, accursed to man, accursed to him that does not respect their sanctity; but they are sacred, for on their maintenance depend the safety of the community, and the service of the deities whom that community honours. And even when the gods have abdicated their ancient power, even to the very last, the terrors of superstition come in aid of the enactments of law; the deep forests and marshes are the abodes of monsters and dragons; wood-spirits bewilder and decoy the wanderer to destruction: the Nicors house at the side of lakes and marshes: Grendel, the man-eater, is a 'mighty stepper over the mark;' the chosen home of the firedrake is a fen.

"The natural tendency, however, of this state of isolation is to give way; population is an ever-active element of social well-being: and when once the surface of a country has become thickly studded with communities settled between the marks, and daily finding the several clearings grow less and less sufficient for their support, the next step is the destruction of the marks themselves, and the union of the settlers in larger bodies, and under altered circumstances."—Kemble's *Saxons in England*, vol. i. book i. ch. 2.—"The Mark."



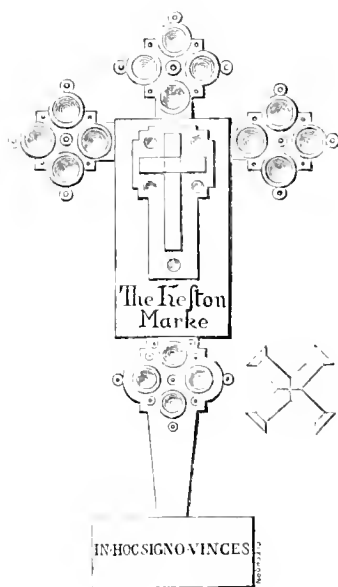
portion of the island converted, and he observes: "This seems the more probable from the circumstance of the Mare containing the *ewealm-ſtow*, or place of execution, where criminals were sacrificed, as Kemble shows in the note cited."

I send you a drawing by Mr. Fairholt of the cross on the communion table, in illustration of this remark, and I beg to refer to Mr. Kemble's observations on the Anglo-Saxon mearge in further illustration of the curious details of Æthelberht's grant.

I have the honour to be, dear Sir,

Your very faithful servant,

GEO. R. CORNER.



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